

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

The FCC should require broadcasters to air public affairs programming that discusses political issues. Broadcasters are using our airways for free but they are not serving the public interest. They are making loads of money on political commercials, but they are not providing a public good. For example, broadcasters are making huge amounts of money on paid political commercials. However, I think the FCC should require them to provide free airtime for politicians to talk for several minutes about issues. Requiring paid political commercials means people running for office must be rich and spend most of their time fundraising.

Our broadcasters have gone almost completely over to entertainment broadcasts. This is not in the public's best interest, but is rather to increase their own incomes. It costs a lot to pay for investigative journalism and reporting, but this is what we need to maintain our democracy. It is the minimum expectation for broadcasters using the public airways.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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